

The Chronicle

SPECIAL MEMBERSHIP ISSUE

May June July 2004

MAKING IT WORK!



Karma Co-op

Membership Policy

In this issue...

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- General Manager's Message | President's Message
- Member Labour Coordinator's Message
- Policy Changes and Rationale | Spotlight on Cashiers
- Pullout Booklet



The Chronicle

Special Issue, May June July 2004



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The Chronicle May June July 2004

The Chronicle is a link between members of this and other co-operative communities; the only viewpoints herein endorsed by Karma Co-op Inc. are those published as reports of the board of directors and its committees.

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Submissions may be sent by e-mail, to chronicle@karmacoop.org. Send your submission within the main body of the message. Please do not send attachments. Submissions are also collected from the red box. All envelopes, articles, and disks must be clearly marked with the author's name. Upcoming editorial deadlines are posted on the bulletin board and the box.

The Chronicle will publish any Karma-related material, subject to editorial policy guidelines. Letters to the editor must contain the writer's full name and telephone number, although names will be withheld at time of publication upon request. All published articles are eligible for work credits (letters to the editor and announcements are not).

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Introduction to the Special Issue

Lachlan Story

Welcome to *Making It Work*, a special issue of *The Chronicle*. As the title suggests, this entire issue is devoted to the topic of membership contribution at the co-op.

Two items are front and centre in this issue. The “Membership Policy Changes and Rationale” article outlines what our policy used to be, what’s new, and why we changed it. The removable insert in the middle of the issue — our new Karma Co-op Member Booklet — is a quick and easy reference guide you can put under your pillow (or at least on your fridge) to find out about membership options, obligations, and resources as of June 1, 2004.

A couples counsellor once told friends of mine that “Any relationship running on its own is probably running downhill” — an annoyingly truthful claim that can easily be extended to Karma’s relationship with member labour policy. For a co-op that has a considerable amount of work done by members, we have a woe-fully small number of people and resources devoted to managing this system. The work these people do is amazing, and our functioning system is proof of that. Still, Karma’s situation and membership have changed quite a bit over

the years, and our policy on membership issues could have been better monitored. My take on the history of policy change at Karma is that our member labour policy has mostly not changed at all since our initial inception as a co-op, with a few big exceptions (relating to non-working membership) that have been relatively abrupt decisions responding to the perceived financial crises of the day.

The Ad Hoc Member Labour Committee formed at the 2002 Annual General Meeting as a response to new and existing problems in the member labour system, and problems with membership contribution more generally (please refer to the Karma Web site for our complete mandate). At that time, we received a mandate to look at the current system and propose changes to improve that system.

It is worth noting here that no system is perfect. And no matter what system we have, it works only by virtue of the commitment and energy that our members bring to it. While our rules and regulations are the frame within which we express our co-operative behaviour, legislating co-operative principles can only go so far in allowing us to run a viable self-owned retail store and create a co-operative community.

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Our changes are the result of a very long and deliberate process of thought and consultation with our membership and with staff. We did not consider any ideas that changed radically the system we have, although some radical changes had been suggested. The intent is to make long-term changes that will benefit the co-op for the long haul, enhancing a culture of responsibility for one's work hours, and connecting this more explicitly to a non-working-member contribution that is based on principles of equity. We hope all members will approve of these goals.

The membership rules we had did not make everyone happy. The changes that we have made might not make everyone happy either, although we live in hope! We look forward to your feedback on the changes, and would encourage those with ideas to get more involved in bringing change to the co-op, as we have.

Our committee now dissolves itself as an ad hoc committee with the mandate to make policy changes. We are morphing into something new: a standing committee that will help administer membership issues and activity. Some of our members are moving on to other work, so we welcome any new members who want to join us and assist in carrying out the important task of "making it work."

This edition of *The Chronicle* is an experiment in the sense that it is devoted to a single issue, and is geared toward providing policy change information to you, the members. I'd like to thank the Chronicle Committee for their willingness to do this collaborative project. Special thanks to Suzanne Molina, who did all the not-fun parts of being an editor with few of the perks of being one, and to David Howard for his graphics and design skills.

I'd like to thank all the staff for their patience with the committee, and the ideas they offered at various stages of this process. When things go wrong with member labour, the staff often pick up the pieces. Their dedication to the store has on more than one occasion made me examine my own commitment to what is, after all, our store. If, after two years of work, we have perhaps done little to immediately reduce the number of unfilled work shifts at the co-op, we hope these changes lay a good foundation to address this problem over the next two years! Sara Pulins, the member labour coordinator, and Marilou Lawrence, the membership secretary, have both been of immense help in terms of their knowledge and participation in this process. I'd also like to thank the board of directors and general manager Sarah Fairley for making the discussion of membership policy a priority this year, and for supporting the committee in many ways.

Finally, I'd like to thank past and present members of the Member Labour Committee. Many of our members are relatively new to Karma, and they have shown me that our incoming membership is just as committed and passionate about Karma as those of us who have been here much longer. John Bowers, Jennifer Brown, Betsy Carter, Linda Doran, Brendan Heath, Jade Levia, Sara Pulins, Kevin Raney, and Aysa September have put in many, many hours over the last two years on this project (and Linda has provided many fine meals at her house!).

It has been a privilege to be a board liaison to this committee, the members of which have taught me so much about the true meaning of co-operation.



Message From the General Manager

Warning: Learning Curve Ahead!

Sarah Fairley

Hats off to the Member Labour Committee and to Sara Pulins, our member labour coordinator! These folks took on the huge task of revisioning our member labour system, and they've done a marvelous job of it.

Figuring out how to implement changes to the member labour system was no easy task. There were more details than anyone could have imagined: forms to change, forms to create, training manuals to revise, procedures to establish, and guides to write. At long last, it appears that we are good to go. Still, there will be a bit of a learning curve for all of us throughout the month of June.

Karma's cashiers will be provided with on-the-job training to familiarize them with the new procedures. However, with approximately 150 different people due to operate the cash register in the month of June — and each for just two hours — it is likely that your cashier will still be getting acquainted with the new procedures when it comes time to ring in your groceries. So please be patient.

Every effort has been made to provide staff with the necessary information to be able to address members' questions and concerns. It is difficult, however, to anticipate every training need. So if the manager on duty is unable to resolve your

concern immediately, please be patient. Concerns that cannot be addressed immediately will be passed on to the appropriate person and you will receive a reply.

I dream sometimes about being able to implement change bit by bit. It would be great if we all had to learn just one new thing at a time. Unfortu-

nately, Karma's membership policies are so interconnected that it is not possible to separate them out in this way.

Implementing so many changes at once will require a bit of effort on all of our parts. So come on folks — dig out that cooperative spirit of yours and put it to use.



With approximately 150 different people due to operate the cash register in the month of June, it is likely that your cashier will still be getting acquainted with the new procedures

Message From the President

Exercising Common Values

Graeme Hussey

Karma's mission is designed to facilitate co-operative democratic and economic participation by its membership in relation to the food we eat, exhibiting our collective economic, ethical, environmental, health, and political values. With the June 1 changes to the member labour system, the Member Labour Committee has set an example of what can be accomplished when individuals work together co-operatively to support common values.

Karma best exercises its mission by understanding its membership and community. Karma consists of about 1,000 owners with a diverse set of values. Collectively, Karma's members operate a unique food retail co-operative. We are the only member-owned food co-operative left in Toronto. In North America we are part of a small number of food co-operatives that continue to operate as both member owned and substantially member operated.

Member ownership and participation support the sentiments expressed in our mission and the seven internationally recognized co-operative principles:

- Voluntary and open membership
- Democratic member control
- Member economic participation
- Autonomy and independence
- Education, training, and information
- Co-operation among co-operatives
- Concern for community

The changes to our member labour

system have been made to benefit both individual members — whether working or non-working — and the co-op itself. The new system allows members to

choose freely between participating as working or non-working members with the knowledge that both are valued



Beautiful Karma produce

equally at Karma. The changes will create a system that supports the operations of Karma, value the contributions of both working and non-working members, and make it easier for members to participate as working members.

I would like to thank and congratulate the Member Labour Committee, the committee liaisons, the membership secretary, the member labour coordinator, the general manager, and the Chronicle Committee for all of their hard work. Their co-operation in conducting a thorough review of our member labour system, our general membership, and in publishing this special issue of *The Chronicle* is a good example of how Karma members work together to create positive change. Their work has been valuable, and will be felt for a long time to come at Karma.



Message From the Member Labour Coordinator Feel Guilty No More!

Sara Pulins

I spend a lot of time at Karma: I'm the member labour coordinator, the health and beauty manager, and a shift manager. I'm also a member and a shopper. So I spend a lot of time listening to members cash out. And I've noticed a pervasive theme as I hover around the cash. That theme is the non-working member guilt song.

I joined as a working member years before becoming a staff member, and I still managed to fall behind in hours despite my childless, single, carefree existence. So as much as I and all the other staff greatly appreciate working members and their contributions (we'd be half dead without them), I understand why we have non-working members. This brief evangelical piece is meant to help remove the self-flagellating voice that exists in some of your non-working heads. So without further ado:

Six Reasons Not to Feel Guilty About Your Non-Working Status

It's a waste of energy: Guilt is not a great motivator. The truth is, we'd rather have you pay off your debt (in work hours or cash), change to non-working status, and continue to shop than slink away feeling guilty and too embarrassed to enter our doors.

Viability: Our mandate states that we want to operate a "viable food co-operative food store." Currently, this would not be possible without the financial contribution of non-working members. We need you, and you love to

shop here. It works for both of us.

Greatness: You may once have been a very dutiful working member and contributed your greatness to Karma tenfold at some point in time. But due to life circumstances you no longer have the time and energy to be a working member. Your greatness is appreciated, so just relax and do your shopping.

Business in other worlds: You might be making a contribution outside of the Karma world. Maybe you're a single mom with five kids who just can't fathom adding another commitment to your schedule. Working members also have busy schedules, but you're doing what you can.

Money buys stuff: You could be a non-working member with a hefty income who prefers to spend \$500 a month at Karma, where you have more choice over your food, than \$500 a month at Loblaws. Karma needs your money for the things it can't get through member labour alone — like new coolers and shelving and such.

Ten per cent: As a non-working member, you're paying 10 per cent more on your groceries, or a flat fee of \$18 per member per month. That should be reason enough not to feel guilty.

Now, as member labour coordinator, I am of course happy to find work for anyone who wants to do some member labour. If you're interested in making up owed hours, switching to working status, or need assistance with job decisions, I'm your gal. Call me at 416-534-1240 (a direct line at Karma) or send me an e-mail via mlc@karmacoop.org.

K

Membership Policy Changes and Rationale

Ad Hoc Member Labour Committee

This article is an outline of the changes the Ad Hoc Member Labour Committee has made to the membership policy, along with a discussion of why these decisions were made. While this piece cannot hope to do justice to the deliberations and struggles we have had in arriving at these changes, we nevertheless hope to lay out the basic issues.

Making changes to Karma's member labour system and other member-related policies is meant to motivate members to take on and maintain working-member status, to make the member labour system more accountable, and to create more equity between working and non-working members. The changes are to be understood as an interrelated whole. Following are the individual changes along with our rationale and any important implementation notes.

A. Annual Clearing of Work Hour Deficit

If a member ends a fiscal year with a work hour deficit, he or she will be required to work or pay off that deficit during the subsequent fiscal year.

Rationale

Currently, many of our working members fall behind in their monthly work commitment. The reasons are varied, and range from not enough resources focused on helping members work or pay off these hours to the lack of any policy that makes it necessary to even do so. Some members accumulate a significant number of owed hours that are not resolved before the

member leaves the co-op (when the owed hours are deducted from the member's initial \$70 loan). This policy change will enable the co-op to actively reduce this liability while the individual is still a member. Clearing the amount on an annual basis would even (in some cases) net more hours or revenue for Karma.

More important, this change is part of an attempt to change "work culture" at Karma. We want to cultivate a new norm, where people take their monthly shift as seriously as they would any other work in their life: signing up for regular shifts, cancelling early and responsibly if needed be, and proactively signing up for another shift to replace one that is missed — as opposed to carrying a "work debt."

This change also intervenes in the all-too-common process of people joining as working members, falling behind in work obligations, and then switching to non-working status. In this transition, owed hours are rarely worked off. Indeed, the majority of hours owed at Karma belong to non-working members who were formerly working members and who still carry a four- to eight-hour work deficit. This policy change asks all members to start thinking about their work commitment to the co-op as an annual total number of hours, or the cash equivalent of these hours.

Rules

- Working members are required to work or pay off any hours owed as of

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Karma Co-op Member Booklet



Want to become a member of Karma Food Co-operative?

- First, attend an orientation, scheduled through Sondra at 905-816-5055.
- Optional: Do a trial shop — shop at Karma once without being a member. Cash only.
- Pay a fully refundable loan to Karma of \$70. Payment plans available.
- Pay a yearly membership fee of \$17, which covers the cost of several member services.
- Then choose between becoming a working or non-working member. See inside for details.

Karma Co-op Store Hours:

Monday 11 am to 7 pm
Tuesday to Thursday 11 am to 9 pm
Friday 10 am to 9 pm
Saturday 10 am to 6 pm
Sunday 11 am to 5 pm

Closed all statutory holidays and for biannual inventories

Member Labour Options

Effective June 1, 2004

Working or Non-Working: Which One Suits You Best?

Working members contribute two hours of work per month in exchange for paying the shelf prices on all products. Non-working members pay a 10 per cent surcharge on top of the shelf prices on all products. Both working and non-working members are entitled to full membership privileges.

Any member may switch from working to non-working status and vice versa. The change must be made at the beginning of a calendar month. When switching from working to non-working, members must either work or pay off any owed work hours before being switching to non-working status. Contact: membership secretary.

Work Credit Bonus

All members receive two hours of work credit upon joining. We know it takes time to figure out what work will suit you best, as well as what work is needed in the store — so this is your chance to explore! Please use this time to find out about your options and how you can contribute to the store's operations. Contact: member labour coordinator or any work team coordinator.

Members who join as non-working will be credited with two hours member labour in the event they decide to switch to a working membership. Non-working members will still be expected to pay the

surcharge in their first month of membership. Contact: membership secretary.

Being a Working Member

The most efficient way to fulfill your work obligation is to join a work team. Most of the work teams focus on one of four different jobs in the store. Each work team has at least one coordinator responsible for filling as many shifts as possible. Once you choose a certain team, your coordinator can slot you in for a certain shift each month, so your work hours become part of your routine.

Members can also sign up for shifts as they arise. These shifts are listed on the work shifts board hanging on the wall over the buggies. Members are also welcome to call the store to inquire about available work.

Work Teams and Coordinators

Set up: Linda Rosengarten 416-657-1997

Set up starts approximately two hours before the store opens.

No training required.

Cash: Monday to Thursday, 3 pm to 9 pm: Sandra Gregson 416-597-1265

Monday to Thursday, 11 am to 3 pm and Friday 10 am to 5 pm: Ellen Eyeman 416-766-4767

Friday 5 pm to 9 pm and all day Saturday and Sunday: Eleanor Ward 416-972-1399

All cash shifts require training.

Cash training sessions are scheduled a few times a month. To schedule training, contact the member labour coordinator.

Cheese cutting: Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday: Kim and Don 416-533-0855

All cheese-cutting shifts require training.

This work team is currently full.

Clean up: Monday to Thursday: Miriam and Roberta 416-658-1411

Friday to Sunday: Burns Wattie 416-924-3670

Clean up begins approximately 15 minutes before the store closes each day.

No training required.

Committees

Working members can also do committee work. Generally, it is advisable to become acquainted with the store and its policies and procedures before joining a committee. If you are on a committee, or serve as a member of the board of directors, you receive four hours' work credit per month. You will be expected to attend all meetings, do additional tasks as required, and spend at least four hours per month on committee work. Therefore, working on a committee requires some commitment. The chairperson of the committee or the board liaison to the committee helps the membership secretary keep track of the hours that should be credited to each committee member. Contact: committee chairs or the member labour coordinator.

Committees and Coordinators

Maintenance: Contact member labour coordinator for details.

Chronicle Committee (member newsletter): Contact the committee at chronicle@karmacoop.org.

Food Issues: Contact John at foodissues@karmacoop.org.

Orientation: Contact Alisa at orientation@karmacoop.org. This committee is currently full.

Human Resources: Contact Graeme at president@karmacoop.org.

Finance: Contact Jeff at finance@karmacoop.org.

Promotions: Contact Michelle at promotions@karmacoop.org.

Web: Contact Lee at webmaster@karmacoop.org.

Member Labour: Contact Brendan at labourcommittee@karmacoop.org.

Falling Behind In Your Hours?

All working members should be able to find regular monthly shifts they can work. However, should you fall behind in hours, there are several options that allow you to work off more than two hours at a time. Contact: member labour coordinator.

Temporary Surcharge

Working members who fall behind by four hours or more pay a temporary non-working surcharge. They are not charged for work hours during the months they pay the surcharge. Two-person households pay a temporary surcharge after they fall behind by eight hours.

If you are paying a temporary surcharge you need to make up all of your owed hours before the surcharge is removed. There is one exception to this rule: if you work one day, then on that particular day

you do not pay the surcharge.

Spring 'Clearing'

On June 1 of each year, members are informed of any work hours owed for the previous fiscal year. Most members work off these hours. But members may also pay off owed work hours at a rate of \$9 per hour. Members who do not reach a zero balance at some point in the following fiscal year will have their cards pulled and moved to the office. The member's ability to shop at Karma may be revoked until the debt is paid.

Cancellations

Should you need to cancel a booked shift — and please remember that it does have an impact on Karma — please notify your coordinator a week in advance. In an emergency, when notice is short (i.e., less than 48 hours), please notify both your coordinator and the store. Karma's phone number is 416-534-1470.

Being a Non-Working Member

Surcharge or Flat Fee

Non-working members pay a 10 per cent surcharge on all products sold at Karma. However, members have the option of paying a flat fee at the beginning of each month. The fee is equivalent to two work hours, or \$18 per member. If you choose the flat-fee option, you pay working-member prices for the remainder of the month. The flat-fee option is more economical for members who spend over \$180 a month at Karma.

Work Exemptions

Work exemptions are available to working and non-working members. Work exemptions apply only if notice is given prior to the time of exemption. During a work exemption, members are exempt from work, but still pay working-member prices. Speak to a manager for information on the appropriate paperwork.

Maternity: Available to anyone upon the birth or adoption of a child. One year per member or six months each for a two-person household.

Medical Disability: Available to anyone with a medical condition that prevents them from working.

Leave of Absence: Available to any member who is not going to be in town for one or several calendar months and will not be shopping at Karma.

Senior Exemption: Available to any member 65 years or over.

Contacts

Member labour coordinator: The member labour coordinator is responsible for facilitating member labour. This includes scheduling cash training, acting as a resource to committees, and helping members with work-related concerns or questions.

Sara Pulins 416-534-1240
mlc@karmacoop.org

Or in person at the store on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays.

Membership secretary: The membership secretary is responsible for maintaining the database on all members, including non-working members. This includes keeping a record of leaves of absences, hours worked, membership fees paid, etc.

Marilou Lawrence 416-534-1470
memberrecords@karmacoop.org

Or in person at the store on Thursdays.

the end of any given fiscal year.

- If a member opts to pay off owed hours in cash, payment must be made by the end of the fiscal year subsequent to the year in which the deficit was incurred.

- If a member opts to work off the owed hours, he or she must at some point during the subsequent fiscal year achieve a work hour deficit of zero.

- A member who does not fulfill either of the above options by the end of the fiscal year subsequent to the year in which the deficit was incurred will have their shopping privileges suspended. Under exceptional circumstances, a member may (with the approval of the board or their designate) be allowed to shop.

- In the case of members who are 65 years of age or older, owed hours will be forgiven.

These rules have been interpreted by some as being “punitive,” and the committee has struggled with this characterization. It is certainly a change from our previous way of working, in which people could carry owed hours until they left the co-op. But the problem that Karma currently struggles with is *not* that we have a lack of working members to do the work that is needed at the co-op — indeed, we have a surplus of available hours on paper. The problem is getting our working members to sign up and show up for 12 work shifts every year. We hope this change strikes a balance between allowing flexibility and fostering responsibility in terms of work commitments.

B. Forgiving But Not Forgetting Owed Hours

Hours that members owe the co-op for missed work from before June 1, 2004, will be forgiven for the purposes of the new “annual clearing of work hour deficit” policy (see Section A). However, these

hours will be recorded separately, and reconciled against the member loan in the event that a member leaves the co-op.

Rationale

This is a one-time decision that the committee struggled with in terms of its fairness. Some of our members owe quite a number of hours, and the grand total of owed hours that have been accumulated over the last few decades in the co-op is very large. It would be nice to see these hours worked or paid off as part of the ushering in of new policies, but this did not seem feasible.

The committee could not come up with a system to retroactively resolve these owed hours that seemed either workable or fair. The precise dates and circumstances surrounding many of these hours is now gone from our records. Many members do not even recall that they are behind in their hours, especially those who started as working members but switched to non-working status because they fell behind in their work commitments (a very common trend). The idea of a Karma owed-hours collection “goon squad” — while funny at the end of a three-hour meeting — seemed unco-operative to say the least.

Thus, our decision is to forgive but not forget these hours. Every member will start June 1 with zero owed hours in our new system (people with a surplus of hours will, of course, keep this surplus). This is intended to create the sense of a “clean slate” and a new start for all our members. The hours that people owed under the old system are not gone, though. The committee felt that this would be unfair to members who have worked reliably and consistently at the co-op over the years.

Instead, these hours will be recorded separately on the back of people’s membership cards, set apart from any hours owed under the new system. They

will stay there until a member leaves the co-op, at which point the owed hours — in addition to any hours owed under the new system — will be deducted from the loan that is returned to people when they leave the co-op. Deducting the value of owed hours from the member loan has been the standard practice at Karma, and is nothing new.

Of course, members are encouraged to resolve owed hours. You can do it before the end of May, or at any time after. These are hours that are owed to our co-op, and it would certainly be nice to have them taken care of.

C. Granting Two-Hour Credit to New Members

All new members of the co-op will receive a two-hour member labour credit regardless of whether they join as a working or non-working member.

Rationale

A two-hour member labour credit provides working members — or non-working members who may decide to change their membership status — the opportunity to research member labour opportunities at the co-op and take on their member labour responsibility. This is intended to reduce the frequent practice of working members falling behind in member labour in the first month of membership. Members who join as non-working members will also be credited with two hours of member labour to be used in the event that they decide to switch to working-member status.

Signing up for member labour shifts is currently a do-it-yourself process. Following orientation, working members — who comprise 90 per cent of new signups — are left to fend for themselves, with only the contact info of work-team coordinators. The two-hour credit is a recognition of this, and will act as a complement to new orientation scripts and improved

access to and understanding of the member labour system.

D. Reduction in Temporary Surcharge Threshold

The threshold for when a member begins to pay the non-working member surcharge will be reduced to four hours from six hours.

Rationale

This will make it easier for a member who has fallen behind in their member labour to work or pay off their owed hours. It will also encourage members to work more regularly so that they do not reach the surcharge level. Karma may also generate more revenue from those members who are expected to work but do not.

This change will ensure that members are contacted sooner about owed hours, which will help them address their work debt and facilitate their transition to consistently active working members.

Process

The temporary surcharge slip will be added to a one-person membership card when four or more hours are owed, and to a two-person membership card when eight or more hours are owed. Member cards will now be reconciled on a monthly basis — not every two months, as is the current practice — to minimize the amount of hours a member can owe.

E. Modifying the Current Credit System for Karma Board and Committee Work

All board and committee members will be credited with four hours of member labour per month of service.

Rationale

Currently, committee members in one-person households receive two hours of member labour credit while on a committee and an additional one and a half hours of member labour credit per month of

service on a committee after they leave the committee or board. Committee members in two-person households receive four hours of member labour credit while on the committee and an additional one and a half hours of member labour credit per month of service on a committee after they leave the committee or board.

The new automatic credit of four hours per month is intended to reflect the minimal and predictable labour requirements and expectations for committee work (for instance, a two-hour meeting per month plus two hours of work outside of the meeting). All committee members, whether they are part of a one- or two-person household, will be treated equally and will receive credit for their service when they perform the service. This change will clearly present the minimum member labour expectations for a committee and enable the board to better evaluate the work of a committee and its individual members. Please note that specific committees and members of committees may have fewer or more hours credited to them if the committee and board deems this more appropriate for the work that is done.

Note to current Karma committee members: hours worked under the old credit system will be reconciled and credited to you at the end of May 2004.

F. Implementation of \$9 Work Shift Cash Equivalent

The work shift cash equivalent will be increased to \$9 per hour of member labour from \$7.50 per hour of member labour. In the past, the \$7.50 value was assigned to a member labour hour by the co-op mostly for purposes of deducting this value off a member loan when a member left the co-op and owed the co-op

outstanding work hours. Members could also pay off owed work hours using this amount, although this practice was rare for a number of reasons. Both of these uses for the work shift cash equivalent will continue.

Rationale

This makes it easier to pay off owed hours. Payment will now be made at the cash, and not at the office, which will encourage members to reconcile their owed hours in a timely fashion in either work or cash equivalent. The value will also be used as the basis of a new payment option for non-working members (see below). The increased work shift cash equivalent will also better reflect the value of member labour to the co-op when compared to replacing it with paid staff labour, and will also provide an equitable basis for comparison between working and non-working member contributions.

G. Increase in Non-Working Surcharge and Implementation of Flat Fee Option

The current surcharge will be raised to 10 per cent from 8 per cent, and a monthly flat fee option will be implemented. Non-working members will have two options: they can pay a surcharge of 10 per cent on their purchases or they can opt to pay a flat fee at the beginning of the month.

With the flat fee option, a one-person household will pay an \$18 flat fee at the beginning of each month, based on the two-hour-per-month work shift cash equivalent. Two-person households will pay \$36. Both will then be permitted to shop at the working-member rate for the remainder of that month. When the cashier receives payment, they will put a stamp on the member's card indicating that they can shop at the working-member rate for that month.

Rationale (Surcharge)

The surcharge applied to non-working members should be based on the principle of equity of contribution between working and non-working members of the co-op. We believe that raising the surcharge to 10 per cent from 8 per cent represents a more equitable surcharge rate for non-working members. Given the cost of an average monthly shop for non-working members (using 2002 figures), this change leads to an increase of \$1.72 a month.

The methodology for determining an equitable surcharge was based on the following question: How much value would Karma realize, and therefore be able to save on staff wages, if the non-working membership made the same two-hour-per-month contribution that working members make? This question yields a range of possible equitable surcharges, and the final decision of 10 per cent is the outcome of much consultation.

We recognize that the decision to raise the surcharge, and by how much, is perhaps the single most controversial policy change. We hope that all Karma members can move forward together on this decision.

Rationale (Flat Fee)

The contributions of working members and non-working members will now be valued equally. Non-working members will be able to choose the option that economically benefits them the most, depending on the amount of money they spend at the co-op each month. For example, with the new surcharge, a non-working one-person household that spends \$180 per month at Karma would pay \$18

per month in surcharges. If that member knows he or she will spend more than \$180 a month at Karma, it would be to their financial benefit to pay the monthly flat fee of \$18.

The flat fee option emphasizes an equivalency between working and non-working contributions. One challenge with the surcharge is that it is hard to find equivalency between it and the fixed number of hours that a working member contributes — one fluctuates with the amount of money spent at the co-op, the other does not. We hope that the flat fee



Confused? Talk to member labour coordinator, Sara Pulins

option highlights the principle of parity. It may even encourage some of our non-working members to shop more at Karma. Currently, non-working members shop, on average, less than working members.

Conclusion

We encourage anyone with questions about these policy changes to contact Brendan Heath, the chairperson of the Member Labour Committee, via labourcommittee@karmacoop.org. Members can also contact Sara Pulins, the member labour coordinator, via phone at 416-534-1240, e-mail at mlc@karmacoop.org, or in person at the store. Messages may also be left in the board box for Lachlan Story, the board liaison to the Member Labour Committee.

Spotlight on Cashiers

Lachlan Story

Welcome to my own particular take on the people of Karma and what makes them tick — and be ticked off. I first got the idea for this series while in conversation with a cashier, when I realized that my habit of holding groceries up at eye level so they could better see the price sticker was actually not very helpful. I started doing it because I thought calling out the prices was treating them like a mere cog in the Karma Checkout Machine. But *au contraire* as they say in French co-ops. My wobbly hand was giving this particular cashier a serious

headache, and she much preferred me to just read the price off the product myself. The lesson: why don't you ask your cashier what they prefer? So, after a whole issue of policy talk, let's turn to what is really the most important part of co-op membership: our day-to-day, face-to-face interactions with the people of Karma.

The Karma Cashier: Habitat and Behaviour

In my experience, there are two general types of people: those who are good with numbers and buttons, and those who are not. I am in the latter category, so I sit in awe and admiration of the skill and dexterity of the mighty cashier.

Think for a brief moment of the challenges of doing this job only once a month

and retaining familiarity and ease with all the categories and button placements on the register. The thought of peering nearsightedly at rows of buttons while a whole lineup of Karma members hum and haw is my idea of a truly unpleasant time.



The beast that must be tamed

So be gentle when you're in the lineup.

Some members may think that the cashier is the mere conduit to the cash register, but their job involves much more than this. Checking and updating our member cards,

dealing with shopping lists, processing annual fees — the good cashier knows about Karma policies and procedures that you and I do not. They also tell us when we are behind in work hours, or when we should pick up something important in the office. Note to those in trouble: don't shoot the messenger! The cashier is your friend, and does not like being the bearer of bad tidings or extra work.

Karma's cashiers also double as grocery clerks in their down time, bagging many of the bulk products (among other noble tasks). Reviled amongst cashiers are the bulk raisins, which resist the best attempts of the uninitiated to break them into smaller portions for bagging. Rather than using a scoop to hack chunks off the hard,

basketball-sized mass, I am told that the best method of dealing with this product is to pound the mass to pieces while it is still in its original bag. To give credit where credit is due, I dub this practice The Dalton Technique, and cashiers everywhere should sing the praises of its progenitor. (Please consult cashier Joan Dalton or a staff member before trying it for the first time — and don't forget your safety glasses.)

Although brief moments do arrive in which cashiers can rest their weary feet and fingers, we must note here that the once padded stool at the cash is now bereft of cushioning and reduced to a decidedly uncomfortable looking circle of hard wood. Note to the Maintenance Committee: protect our cashiers' precious posteriors! Is there a member out there with upholstery skills and half an hour of member labour to spare?

Exercise Is Good For You

The cashiers I talked to really like their jobs. In fact, barring the above observations, my usual tendency to try to uncover the negative was remarkably unsuccessful. I am thus left with only one more point: some members forget to push their groceries along the counter when checking out, leaving it to the cashier to reach out and grab the products in order to ring them in. This is not good for the backs and necks of our cashiers! At first I was at a loss to explain this behaviour, and then it came to me: these members are on retail store autopilot! They have forgotten that there is no conveyor belt at Karma! A behavioural psychologist I met at a party called this an "autonomic fugue state,"

though he may have been joking. But the issue remains.

Some might argue that it's time to bring Karma into the 21st century by installing a conveyor belt at the checkout. Ever-willing to toil on behalf of the co-operative movement, I investigated the possibil-

ity of purchasing a second-hand conveyor belt on eBay. There was one going for \$400 (US) last week and it looked quite nice: a Vorner 2100 series speed and height adjustable belt conveyor, approximate dimensions 60 x 22 x 36. Regrettably,



Go on... take one!

it needs to be shipped from El Paso, Texas, and after we pay for the shipping — it weighs 325 lbs. — the cost goes up considerably.

Factory Supply Inc. offers a real beauty (for a conveyor belt): new, 125 lbs., and in stainless steel for only \$1,400 (US) plus installation. But to protect ourselves in the case of another blackout, I suggest installing the optional gas motor. It's five horsepower, and only \$350 extra. Perhaps interested members can form a Conveyor Belt Committee and report back to the board on the details now that I've gotten the ball rolling.

As we await further development on the technology front, I encourage members to find innovative, non-technological ways to propel their groceries down the cash desk to the cashier.

Thank you, cashiers, for the good work you do.

In the next issue of *The Chronicle*, I will explore that rare and elusive Karma member: the setup worker.

Confused?

Have questions about how these changes affect your membership? Contact member labour coordinator Sara Pulins via phone at 416-534-1240, e-mail at mlc@karmacoop.org, or in person at the store on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays.

Questions?

Have a question about something in this issue? Have some feedback to give the Member Labour Committee? If so, send an e-mail to labourcommittee@karmacoop.org, or leave a written message in the Karma board box addressed to Lachlan Story (the board liaison to the Member Labour Committee). Someone will be happy to contact you about your concerns or praises.

C O M M I T T E E S A N D C O O R D I N A T O R S

Maintenance: Contact member labour coordinator Sara Pulins via phone at 416-534-1240, e-mail at mlc@karmacoop.org, or in person at the store on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays

Chronicle Committee (member newsletter): Contact the committee at chronicle@karmacoop.org.

Food Issues Committee: Contact John at foodissues@karmacoop.org.

Orientation Committee: Contact Alisa at orientation@karmacoop.org.

Human Resources: Contact Graeme at president@karmacoop.org.

Finance Committee: Contact Jeff at finance@karmacoop.org.

Promotions Committee: Contact Michelle at promotions@karmacoop.org.

Web Committee: Contact Lee at webtech@karmacoop.org.

Member Labour Committee: Contact Brendan at labourcommittee@karmacoop.org.

MISSION STATEMENT

Our aim is to:

1. create a community of actively participating members;
2. foster a healthy connection to the food we eat, the people who grow it, and the other organizations who share our beliefs;
3. co-operatively educate ourselves on environmental issues; and
4. exercise political and economic control over our food
by operating a viable co-operative food store.

STAFF LIST

General Manager

Sarah Fairley

Grocery Manager

James van Bolhuis

Produce Manager

Michael Armstrong

Health & Beauty Manager

Sara Pulins

Shift Managers

Sheila Banerjee

Paul Dixon

Michel Sauve

Bookkeeper

Victoria Bale

Membership Secretary

Marilou Lawrence

Member Labour Coordinator

Sara Pulins

Clerks

Naomi Fance

Mike Haliechuck

Lisa McLean

Sasha Sefter

Kevin Wyse

HOURS OF OPERATION



Monday 11-7

Tuesday 11-9

Wednesday 11-9

Thursday 11-9

Friday 10-9

Saturday 10-6

Sunday 11-5